

ASPECTS OF INDIAN HISTORY

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CHAPTER 6

A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF TATAR KHAN'S LITERARY CONTRIBUTION

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Besides political and architectural achievements, the Sultans of Delhi remarkably contributed in the cultural aspect of language, literature, traditional and rational sciences. However, the evidences reveal that in the Sultanate period, especially during the time of Tughlaqs, much work have been produced on *tafsir*, *hadis* and *fiqh*. It is noteworthy that the state patronage proved to be instrumental in the development of religious literature notable the *tafsir* and *fatawa* literature. Thus on account of the keen interest shown and patronage extended by some Sultans and nobles, the contemporary *ulama* involved themselves in the compilation of the *tafsir* and *fatawa* works. This is evident from dedication of such works to the Sultans and nobles. It is also worth mentioning that the Sultanate period witnessed the beginning of the *tafsir* and *fatawa* compilation by a board of *Ulama*. These religious works were compiled in Arabic and Persian languages, but preferably in Arabic. Among the prominent Tughlaqid nobles who extended their patronage to the *ulama*, the name of Tatar Khan is notable. He not only extended patronage to the learning class rather he constituted a group of *ulama* for the compilation of *tafsir* and *fatawa* literature. The outcome of his effort was the compilation of the two valuable works, i.e. *Tafsir-i-Tatarkhani* and *Fatawa-i-Tatarkhani*.

Tatar Khan, a Tughlaq noble of prominence was the *Wazir-i-Mamalik* during the reign of Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq.¹ Shams Siraj Afif records that in an invasion led by Khurasani prince, a child was born in the territories of Dipalpur and Multan. Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq attacked Khurasani troops and defeated them. In a battle chaos, the new born child was left behind, who was then brought to the Sultan Ghiyassuddin Tughlaq. The Sultan brought him up like his son and named him Tatar Malik.² Having his Mongol background Tatar Malik became a brave soldier and thus, he was assigned a place in the centre of the army.³ He also held the post of *muqti* of Sonargaon (Dacca),⁴ governorships of Multan,⁵ Zafarabad.⁶ Later he was appointed the *Muqti* of Hissar Firuzah by Firoz Shah Tughlaq.⁷

He was a poet and used to compose verses.⁸ Once due to unspecified reason Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq got angry with him. He was banished from the royal court and transferred to another place. He composed a verse on his departure, describing his feelings and situation, and sent it to the Sultan. In the verse Tatar Khan laments that: "He does not know why I am sad, for no fault have I been separated from my friends." Sultan praised these verses and called him back and honoured him with gifts.⁹ Malik Tatar Khan, the leading noble under the Tughlaq Sultan, was the known person behind the compilation of two famous works i.e. *Tafsir-i-Tatarkhani* and *Fatawa-i-Tatarkhani*.¹⁰

These works were unknown to the scholars, until the introductory reference was given by Riyasat Ali Nadvi in his significant article '*Khan-i-Azam Tatar Khan aur Uski Yadgar ilmi Khidmat*' in *Ma'arif* in 1932. According to him both the works *Tafsir-i-Tatarkhani* and *Fatawa-i-Tatarkhani* were compiled with the same mode of arrangement. The collection of all the previous Arabic works on *Tafsir* was collected and then arranged in systematic chapters. Thus the compilation was named *Tafsir-i-Tatarkhani*. In this compilation views of different *Ulamas* on various *ayāt* of the Quran were meticulously recorded.¹¹ Regarding *Tafsir-i-Tatarkhani* Afif explicitly mentions that Tatar Khan extended patronage to the learned men of the time and, thus, ably organized a syndicate of *Ulama* to prepare a *Tafsir* (Commentary) on Quran. For this purpose he had collected all the available commentaries on Quran and consulted various *Ulama* of the period. However in this compilation Tatar Khan as compiler included different interpretations of various *Ulama* on delicate points of the Quranic verses.¹² Modern scholar Mahdi Hussain considers *Tafsir-i-Tatarkhani* a commentary of Quran with a compendium of all the extant commentaries.¹³ It may, thus, safely presume that *Tafsir* was compiled by a board of *Ulama* on the demand of Malik Tatar Khan.¹⁴ Thus, the author of *Nuzhat-ul-Khwatir* wrongly stated that *Tafsir-i-Tatarkhani* was written by Tatar Khan himself.¹⁵

Tatar Khan's another work of compilation was *Fatawa-i-Tatarkhania* which surpassed all previous works on jurisprudence. In view of K. A. Nizami, *Fatawa-i-Tatarkhania* was greatest achievement of the Sultanate period on *Fiqh*.¹⁶ Afif says that Tatar Khan got prepared an authentic *Fatawa*. Various books on *Fatawa* available at Delhi were collected. Different views and interpretations of the Muftis on various issues were incorporated along with their names. The said collection in thirty volumes, was called '*Fatawa-i-Tatarkhania*', was a great achievement.¹⁷ Some of the sources utilized for its compilation are mentioned in its preface. These works are *al-Fatawa-i-Khania*, *Fatawa-i-Zahiria*, *Jama-ul-Fatawa*, *al-Hidaya*, *Fatawa-al-Atabiya*, *Fatawa-i-Sirajuddin*, *Khazanat-ul-Fiqh*, *Fatawa-i-Kabiri*, *Fatawa-i-Saghiri*.¹⁸ While others like *Fatawa-i-Ahl-i-Samarqand*, *Fatawa-i-Aahu*, *Fatawa-i-Biqali*,¹⁹ *Fatawa-i-Sadr-ul-Shaheed*²⁰ and *Fatawa-i-Mawra-un Nahr*²¹ are also mentioned. The statement of the compiler that he had arranged its chapters on the pattern of *al-Hidaya* shows that it was the main work took up by the compiler.²² Thus it shows that rich sources for the compilation of religious works were available to the compiler during the Tughlaq period.²³

Like *Tafsir* compilation, the work on *Fatawa* also remained neglected by the modern scholars. Riyasat Ali Nadvi introduced this work through his two articles published in *Ma'arif* in 1932 and 1947.²⁴ Then reference of the *Fatawa* compiled by Tatar Khan finds mention in various catalogues²⁵ which identified various manuscripts preserved in different libraries and collections.²⁶ In 1984 Qazi Sajjad Husain edited the work on the basis of various manuscripts.²⁷

Fatawa-i-Tatarkhani is significant because of its contents which cover the contemporary social and religious issues such as fosterage, divorce, maintenance, manumission of slaves, Oaths, international relations, fixed punishments and apostates, absconding of slaves, missing persons, partnership and endowment which can be better called as an encyclopaedic work on *Fiqh*.²⁸ A renowned Arab biographer, Haji Khalifah, in his work *Kashf-ul-Zunun*, records that *Fatawa-i-Tatarkhania* was being famous among the Islamic scholars of west Asia. In the 10th century of Hijra era/16-17th Century A.D. a Syrian scholar Ibrahim Ibn Muhammad al-Halbi prepared a summary of this work.²⁹ It shows the value and importance of the work. Thus, Haji Khalifah referred that the *Fatawa-i-Tatarkhania* is the work of Imam-i-Fiqh Alim bin 'Ala Hanafi, in many volumes, compiled by the order of Khan-i-Azam Tatar Khan. Thus it was famous as *Fatawa-i-Tatar Khania*. He said that the compiler named it *Zād-ul-Musafir*.³⁰ At another place, writing about *Zād-ul-Musafir* he says that this work is on *Fiqh* and is called with the name of *Fatawa-i-Tatar Khania* which is the compilation of Maulana Alim bin Ala al Hanafi.³¹

Regarding the compilation of *Fatawa-i-Tatar Khani* there are some misunderstandings. Abdul Haq Muhaddis Dehlavi in his treatise said that the work is dedicated to Tatar Khan by Maulana Alim Andapathi who was the noble of Sultan Alauddin Khalji.³² Contrary to it other scholars treated it as the work of some Tatar Sultans of Central Asia.³³ Mahdi Hussain called it 'a study of comparative jurisprudence in thirty volumes with a digest of all the *Fatawa* that had been issued under the previous Sultans of Delhi.'³⁴ While, an 18th Century scholar says that it was originally called *Zad-ul-Musafir* and later ascribed to Tatar Khan and then called *Fatawa-i-Tatar Khani*.³⁵ But Zafar-ul-Islam in his recent work rejected all these views and on the basis of Afif's evidence treated it a joint work of a board of Ulama and considered Maulana Alim as the chief of that board.³⁶

However, the modern scholars admit that this work is the compilation of Maulana Alim bin Ala' al-Andapati at the instance of Khan-i-Azam Tatar Khan.³⁷ The writer of the preface of *Fatawa-i-Tatarkhania* has not mentioned his name, but writes that, "I arranged its chapters on the pattern of *al-Hidayah*. and named it *al-Fatawa-al-Tatarkhania*".³⁸ Riyasat Ali Nadvi found the name of Ali bin 'Ala Hindi in the manuscript of in Bankipur, which seems a scribe error of the name Alim bin Ala Hanafi.³⁹

Thus it resolved the problem of the compilation of the *Fatawa* which according to Afif was a joint work of a board of Ulama⁴⁰ and Alim bin Ala' al-Hanafi commonly called Maulana Alim bin Ala Andapatti may be considered as the head of this board.⁴¹ Thus the view of Afif is completely acceptable that a board of Ulama was called to compile the work and Maulana Alim would be the head of that board of Ulama.⁴² Afif's silence over the name of the head compiler of the board of Ulama is still a problem to be solved.

Conclusively, it was because of his keen interest that a school of Quranic Studies was organized and the work on *Fatawa* and *Tafsir* were thus prepared and published. Being well-versed in Islamic law, Tatar Khan embellishes the path of *Tariqat* (action in mysticism) and further assimilated the three main religious aspects, i.e. *Tafsir*, *Fatawa* and *Shariat*.⁴³

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7. Afif, *Tarikh*, p. 148; Zafarabad is a pargana in the Sarkar of Jaunpur.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 388, 390, 393; Eng. tr., p. 228, preserved his verses in his *Tarikh*. One couplet, thus, runs as follows:

گفتی کہ تارخان دیدہ غلام است انما ز چنان کردی گوئی کہ نمیدانی

("You said that Tatar Khan was an ancient slave, but behaved as if you did not know.")
9. *Ibid.*, p. 390; Eng. tr., p. 219.
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